

PANEL: FUTUREFIT YOUR CATALOG

DISCOVERY: A NEW KIND OF LIBRARY CATALOG

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Abstract: In spring 2009, Harvard University in Cambridge Massachusetts, USA, launched a new interface for its OPAC, HOLLIS. The new interface is run by AquaBrowser - <http://www.aquabrowser.com/> - and is currently running along with the old version, now known as HOLLIS Classic. While the new HOLLIS is more intuitive for users, it lacks much of the functionality of the old version. Both versions will therefore be available for at least the foreseeable future.

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HOLLIS is the name of **H**arvard's **O**nline **L**ibrary **I**nformation **S**ystem – its OPAC. In spring 2009 a new version was launched. Since it is also called HOLLIS, the old version is now known as HOLLIS Classic (though many refer to it as Old HOLLIS). The new interface is run by AquaBrowser - <http://www.aquabrowser.com/> - which calls itself a “global market leader in search and discovery for libraries.”

When it was launched, the new HOLLIS was touted as:

- “A discovery environment” – not just a catalog.
- “Easier and friendlier” than HOLLIS Classic.
- Having a simple search box.
- Offering relevancy ranking, facets, and a color-coded word cloud.
- “Intuitive, user-friendly.”

While all of this was more or less true, it quickly became apparent that the new HOLLIS had some serious limitations. For one thing, the searching choices in Old (Classic) HOLLIS were (and remain) much more extensive. HOLLIS Classic offers:

- Keywords anywhere
- Title beginning with ...
- Title keywords
- Author (last name first)

- Author keywords
- Subject beginning with ...
- Medical subject beginning with ...
- Series
- Title on piece beginning with ...
- Chinese: author
- Chinese: title beginning with
- (Same for Japanese and Korean)
- ISBN
- ISSN
- Music publisher number
- Government number
- Call number (Library of Congress)
- Call number (NLM)
- (Call numbers for three libraries, Dewey)
- Other call number (very useful for us as we have items with several different types of call numbers in the Ernst Mayr Library)
- SU docs
- Hierarchical place
- HOLLIS number (savvy patrons actually use this a lot)

Furthermore, HOLLIS Classic has an Extended Search that offers even more choices – location (important since there are more than 70 libraries at Harvard), language, format and date range.

Although new HOLLIS has been, and continues to be, enhanced, it still has nowhere near this many search options. Its Advanced Search option has fewer choices than are available on the front page of HOLLIS Classic. And it has some other quirks; it can't handle non-Roman characters, for instance, a serious deficiency since the University collection has many items in other languages.

New HOLLIS does have some strengths, of course. It really is more intuitive, especially for users accustomed to simple search Google-like boxes. Many items require fewer clicks to get to them. It sorts by relevance, and can be resorted by year or author.

The Word Cloud option, however, is still rather poor. It claims to find related terms; that only those that retrieve hits show up, and that the size of the font indicates relevance.

However, it executes a NEW search when you click on a word in the cloud, rather than searching within the results. And often the choices offered bear no relevancy to the original search. Over time, this will improve as more searches are performed and a knowledgebase is built up, but that may be years and meantime many users simply turn it off.

Facets are offered on the right side of the results screen. These allow the user to narrow the search to specific libraries; further refine the results by:

- Online hits;
- Publication Date;
- Author / Creator;
- Format;
- Language;
- Genre / Form;
- Subjects;
- Other titles;
- Series;
- Location.

Also, in New HOLLIS:

- HOLLIS Numbers are now called Record Numbers (though many patrons still call them HOLLIS Numbers, so that is confusing).
- Occasionally it suggests “Did you mean ...” for fuzzy searches. This can be helpful, but it is unforgiving of even slight mis-spellings.
- Advanced Search and Command Search are available (but not yet as comprehensive as HOLLIS Classic).

Some features of HOLLIS Classic remain superior:

- It searches non-Latin characters (New HOLLIS doesn’t).
- Advanced searching is still better (recently a group of librarians proposed that HOLLIS Classic be made the Advanced Search for New HOLLIS – this would seem to solve the issue of two HOLLISes).
- Patrons can save long lists of items – New HOLLIS is limited to 25 at a time.

In short, certainly for the near future, both versions will be available. Users can choose HOLLIS Classic only (as some librarians do), or use New HOLLIS for initial searches and HOLLIS Classic as needed for more advanced searching. It remains to be seen whether the two systems can be integrated, or if New HOLLIS can ultimately be upgraded to offer all the options and precision provided by HOLLIS Classic.

